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SUBJECT: DOD DAS MACDOUGALL'S DECEMBER 7 MEETING WITH
DEFENSE MINISTER ABIYEV

Classified By: Ambassador Anne Derse for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Department of Defense Deputy Assistant
Secretary James MacDougall and the Ambassador--accompanied by

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Major General Harry Wyatt of the Oklahoma National Guard and
EUCOM Brigadier General Melvin Spiese--met with Defense
Minister Safar Abiyev on December 7 to discuss bilateral
military cooperation. Both sides acknowledged that bilateral
cooperation is continuing to deepen in a variety of fields.
MacDougall told Abiyev the USG is preparing for a joint
State-DOD team to conduct discussions with the GOAJ on
developments in and approaches to Iran. Spiese reviewed
EUCOM's proposal for a bilateral military "work plan" that
would provide for "more effective and comprehensive"
cooperation with Azerbaijan. Abiyev agreed to the "work
plan" concept. End Summary

Review of Bilateral Cooperation

¶2. (C) Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary
James MacDougall and the Ambassador--accompanied by Major
General Harry Wyatt of the Oklahoma National Guard and EUCOM
Brigadier General Melvin Spiese--met with Defense Minister
Safar Abiyev on December 7 to discuss the status of bilateral
military cooperation. Abiyev said the relationship is "very
well developed," and we are actively working to "implement
this program" of bilateral cooperation. Cooperation occurs
at the bilateral level and within the framework of NATO,
Abiyev noted. Abiyev listed several areas where Azerbaijan
is cooperating with the USG: peacekeepers deployed in
Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo; provision of overflight
rights for the coalition; and movement toward NATO standards.
One Azerbaijani brigade has been transformed to NATO
standards, and two additional units--at the corps level--will
be brought up to NATO standards by January 2007. The
headquarters elements of the Air Force and Navy also will be
transformed to NATO standards. Abiyev affirmed that the MOD
seeks to fulfill its IPAP commitments, as is demonstrated by
the MOD's NCO academy and the upgrades taken at Nasosnaya air
field. The MOD's Assimilation and Modeling Center and its
mobile battalion underscore the Ministry's efforts to
modernize. Abiyev noted that there is also strong bilateral
cooperation in the field of Caspian maritime security
initiatives. Abiyev cited the importance of President
Aliyev's visit to Washington and NATO headquarters as
reaffirmation of Azerbaijan's policy of closeness with the

West.

¶3. (C) Abiyev said Azerbaijan will never forget or accept Armenia's occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK). The Azerbaijan armed forces will always be ready to liberate NK if negotiations fail. Abiyev thanked MacDougall for USG efforts within the OSCE Minsk Group process to resolve the conflict. He noted that it would be better if the USG could take a "more active" effort within the Minsk Group. Abiyev also raised Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, saying it restricts our cooperation in "almost all directions." The law puts the bilateral relationship in a certain framework, and we cannot step to the right or the left of this construct. Furthermore, the law requires that cooperation be kept on a year-to-year basis.

¶4. (C) MacDougall thanked Abiyev for his assessment and for Azerbaijan's military cooperation. MacDougall said bilateral cooperation is broadening and deepening, as symbolized by the presence of general officers like Wyatt and Spiese. The USG envisions a greater strategic relationship with Azerbaijan. MacDougall acknowledged limits on the bilateral relations, such as Section 907. The bilateral relationship is not, however, on a year-to-year basis because President Bush has committed to waiving the law annually while he is in office. Moreover, if the NK conflict can be peacefully resolved, the law will no longer be relevant. MacDougall also mentioned that he was encouraged by apparent recent momentum in negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Preparations for Bilateral Iran Discussions

¶5. (C) MacDougall told Abiyev that the USG is preparing for a joint State-DoD team to discuss Iran with the GOAJ. The talks could occur as early as January 2007. The discussions

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would assume that the GOAJ has a keen understanding of Iran. The USG goal remains preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, even though some countries seem to be focusing now on how to deal with the consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran.

We want to work as a partner with Azerbaijan as we seek to deal with the security threat posed by Iran. At senior levels of the USG, there is a growing recognition that Azerbaijan is an "important interlocutor" on Iranian security issues.

Update on Nasosnaya and Potential US Visit

¶6. (C) MacDougall said the USG is working through the budgetary process to help the GOAJ refurbish Nasosnaya to meet NATO standards. Regarding a potential Abiyev visit to the US, MacDougall mentioned that he would raise this issue with the new SECDEF.

Abiyev Agrees to EUCOM "Work Plan"

¶7. (C) Spiese briefed Abiyev on a concept for "formalizing" military cooperation in the next year. Spiese noted that the bilateral relationship is growing deeper and cooperation is becoming more strategic. At the military level, EUCOM seeks to develop a "more effective and comprehensive" way of working with Azerbaijan through a joint "work plan." The work plan's purpose is to further focus our cooperation in a strategic direction and avoid joint activities that are merely random or ad hoc. Instead of joint activities being planned only at the colonel or general level, activities could be planned a year in advance and could receive input through the annual Bilateral Defense Consultations. The intent would be to coordinate activities toward mutual goals and have a means for assessing progress in our strategic relationship. If Abiyev agrees to the plan, he and USEUCOM Deputy Commander General Ward could sign a draft work plan

agreement. This document would help to manage the relationship within a more strategic framework in Washington.

¶8. (C) MacDougall explained the "work plan" process. In bilateral consultations, both sides could agree to specific goals--such as the areas of NCO reforms or maritime security--and both sides could then develop the mechanism to accomplish these goals. For example, EUCOM could provide training, visits, or other measures. Abiyev said he agreed with the proposal. He said the MOD would need to decide on the necessary representatives from the Azerbaijani side and that the planning cycle could only begin after the start of the new year. MacDougall encouraged Abiyev to send newer generals to participate in this process.

US Pursuing All Aspects of the Relationship

¶9. (C) The Ambassador reminded Abiyev of the key US interests in Azerbaijan: security, energy and economic cooperation, and building democracy through political and economic reform. DoD's proposal concretely addresses the security interest. In early February, the USG and GOAJ will launch a new economic commission to enhance our economic cooperation. Additionally, A/S Lowenkron will visit in mid-December to address the democracy aspect of our relationship. In short, the US is actively working to build up the bilateral relationship in all spheres.

¶10. (C) Abiyev closed the meeting with a request for additional literature and example documents from DoD. MacDougall said that he would follow-up with the request.

¶11. (U) DASD MacDougall cleared this message.
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